Opening Doors: The Conant Years 1945–Summer 1975

Frank Warner, 1956 Folk Music Week co-director

© Suzanne Szasz/Jeff Ogans, CDSS Collection at UNH

> "It (Pinewoods) is a great deal of trouble, but if you sell, it should pay for your children's college education."
>
> —Letter from Helen O. Storrow to the Conants

1945 September 2
End of World War II

1945

1950s

1963 Martin Luther King gave his *I Have a Dream* speech

1964 Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan show

1960s

1965 Voting Rights Act

Vietnam War escalated, anti-war sentiment grew

1969 Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon

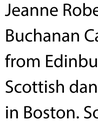
1970

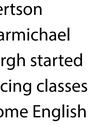
1973 Watergate scandal

Endangered Species Act signed into law

SUMMER 1975

In 1944, Helen Storrow bequeathed Pinewoods to Lily and Dick Conant thinking they might sell it. Instead, the Conants repaired, reopened, and welcomed new communities. For 30 years, they managed Camp with limited financial resources. In 1975, to preserve Pinewoods, the Conants made a generous offer and they negotiated a sale to the Camp community.





Conant Family Collection

1945: Lily and Richard Conant inherited Pinewoods Camp, decided to keep the camp going, and repaired the large, damaged pavilion C# (currently Hands Across).

Recovery from the war, dancing returned

1945: CDS-Boston Centre hosted a weekend and a two-week summer school.

1946: CDS-Boston Centre organized the national Country Dance Society (CDS) summer school as well as their own weekend.

1947: After the war, May Gadd resumed running CDS's national summer school.

Jeanne Robertson Buchanan Carmichael from Edinburgh started Scottish dancing classes in Boston. Some English dancers joined her classes and eventually formed a connection to Pinewoods Camp.

Program Framework Expanded

1950: A third CDS week combined a Leaders Workshop with a Folk Music session featuring John Langstaff, Jean Ritchie, EFDS President Douglas Kennedy, and his wife, Helen Karpeles Kennedy.

John Langstaff was the originator and leader of Folk Music Week and later, the Revels. His performing and promotion of traditional song and dance inspired many generations.

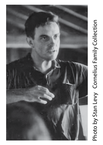


Photo by Stan Levy Cornelius Family Collection

Jean Ritchie's Appalachian roots brought authenticity to the many camp sessions where she was the first traditional American singer/musician on staff.

Wikimedia

In the 50s, the third week combined folk music and recorder playing. CDS Dance I & II included English country and ritual dancing, many regional variations of American squares, American contras, and much folk singing.

1952: Boston became the first overseas branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS).

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE WEEKEND
July 23-25, 1954 Pinewoods Camp
Plymouth, Massachusetts

1954: First RSCDS Boston Branch weekend at Pinewoods. As the first weekend of Scottish dancing in America, Pinewoods attracted dancers from all over the eastern US and Canada.

1960s: Marianne and Conny Taylor started International Dance weekends at Pinewoods. Beginning in the 1950s, they taught folk dance classes and workshops in Boston, nationally and internationally, with an emphasis on cultural diversity.

Graphics from a CDS 1955 brochure

Photo by Jim Martin UNH/CDSSA

Early Music Week

1962: The early music world discovered English dancing, attracting a new community to Camp. To accommodate ensemble classes, CDS created Chamber Music Week.

Photo by Stan Levy UNH/PCC

1964 Pinewoods Morris Men established

Photo by David Conant

Class at the original Newbiggen

1968–1970: Snow during the winter of 1968/1969 collapsed the original Newbiggen pavilion. It was quickly replaced on a new site.

Photo by Stan Levy UNH/PCC

Two generations of English Country dance leaders
l to r: Lily Conant, May Gadd, and Helene Cornelius, 1963

1968 Autumn: Lily Conant suffered a stroke. Dick Conant took over all camp management.

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Pat Shaw and May Gadd, 1974

1974: English Country Dance choreographer Pat Shaw came from England to Camp with his new interpretations of old dances. His newly written dances sparked creativity in the ECD community worldwide.

1971: A wave of Berea College students came to Camp as campers and crew. The Contra dance revival in New England brought new, young dancers to Pinewoods.

1973: RSCDS added a second session during the weekdays to follow the Scottish Session I weekend.

Lily Conant died on October 25.

RIGHT: Singing in the kitchen, 1973 Folk Music Week
l to r: Nick Hodson, Mitch Diamond, Mimi Gredy, and Rebecca Hall

BELOW: The dining room in 1939 remained like this until the renovation in the next century.

Conant Family Collection

Planning for the future

1974: At age 87 Dick Conant decided he could no longer manage Camp. His daughter-in-law Gerda Conant took over management. Conversations began between the Conants and CDSS about Camp operations and a possible sale. (CDS now called CDSS, the Country Dance & Song Society)

Autumn: CDSS conducted a feasibility study to determine if they could purchase and maintain Camp.

1974/1975 Winter: Decision made to create a new non-profit: Pinewoods Camp, Inc. (PCI) to buy Pinewoods.

1975 March: Major fundraising began with Christine Helwig as Capital Campaign chair.

May 9 Pinewoods Camp Inc. (PCI) was officially incorporated.

May 21 Officers of the new PCI, Norman Singer and John Hodgkin, signed a Purchase and Sale agreement with Richard K. Conant, Sr.

Summer: Final season of Pinewoods Camp managed by the Conant family

1975 Summer Sessions:

- International Weekend run by Marianne Taylor
- CDS-Boston Centre July 4 Weekend
- RSCDS Scottish I & II
- CDSS Weeks:
  Chamber Music Week
  The first Family Week
  Dance Weeks I & II
  Folk Music Week

FACDNC

Marianne Taylor

Some of the first new generation leadership: Tom Kruskal, Jim Morrison, Bob Dalsemer, Hank Chapin

Courtesy of Murray Morrison

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Where dance, music, and song traditions thrive.